

Trafficking in Persons Report -[Report Home Page](#)
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CUBA (Tier 3)

Cuba is a source country for women and children trafficked internally for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Cuban adults and children also are exploited for forced labor, mostly in commercial agriculture; some are reportedly trafficked to the United States under circumstances of debt bondage. The extent of trafficking within Cuba is hard to gauge due to the closed nature of the government and sparse non-governmental or independent reporting. However, by all accounts, the country is a major destination for sex tourism, including child sex tourism. Cuba's thriving sex trade caters to thousands of European, Canadian, and Latin American tourists every year, and involves large numbers of Cuban girls and boys, some as young as 12. State-run hotel workers, travel employees, cab drivers, hospitality staff, and police steer tourists to prostituted women and children and facilitate the commercial sexual exploitation of these women and children. Sex trafficking of Cuban women to Mexico and Western Europe also has been reported.

The Government of Cuba does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and it is not making significant efforts to do so. Information about trafficking in Cuba is difficult to obtain because the government does not publicly release information, and attempts to engage public officials are regarded as politically motivated. To improve its efforts to combat trafficking, the government should publicly acknowledge that human trafficking is a problem, and make efforts to prosecute and punish traffickers, especially for sex crimes. Providing greater protection for trafficking victims is vital.

Prosecution

The Government of Cuba prohibits some forms of sex and labor trafficking through various provisions of its penal code. Article 302 prohibits the inducement or promotion of prostitution and provides penalties of up to 20 years in prison; if the crime is committed across international boundaries, penalties may be increased up to 30 years. Article 316 bans trafficking in minors and carries penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment. Cuba also has laws against forced labor and sexual exploitation. Despite these laws, which are sufficiently stringent, it is not known if any prosecutions or convictions of traffickers took place in Cuba during the reporting period. Nonetheless, the Government of Cuba worked with a European country to identify foreign pedophiles and assist with their prosecution. Some foreign pedophiles were prosecuted in Cuba for pedophilia or child pornography; other suspected pedophiles were "kicked out" of the country. There were no known investigations or prosecutions of public officials for complicity with trafficking.

Protection

Efforts by the Government of Cuba to aid trafficking victims were not officially reported over the last year, but appeared weak. Strong evidence suggests that victims are punished for unlawful acts committed due to being trafficked. The government did not show evidence of employing procedures for the identification of trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as persons detained for prostitution violations. Moreover, women and children in Cuba's sex trade are occasionally sent to "reeducation" programs; many are sentenced to years in prison for vagrancy crimes. "Detention and rehabilitation centers" for women and children in prostitution, some of whom may be trafficking victims, are not staffed with personnel who can provide adequate care, and conditions at these detention centers are reported to be harsh. It is not known if Cuban authorities encourage trafficking victims to assist with the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. Cuba does not provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign victims to countries where they face hardship or retribution.

Prevention

The government sponsors no known information campaigns to prevent sex or labor trafficking. The government does not acknowledge or condemn human trafficking as a problem in Cuba. Cuba has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.